

REMARKS

Favorable reconsideration of this application, in light of the following discussion, is respectfully requested.

Claims 1-4, 6-14, 16-21, and 23-35 are currently pending. No claims have been amended herewith.

In the outstanding Office Action, Claims 1-4, 6-14, 16-21, and 23-35 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2004/0179038 to Blattner et al. (hereinafter “the ‘038 application”) in view of U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2002/0109719 to Hata et al. (hereinafter “the ‘719 application”).

With respect to the rejections of Claims 1-4, 6-14, 16-21, and 23-35 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over combinations of references that include the ‘038 application, Applicants note that the ‘038 application was filed on December 30, 2003, which is later than the foreign priority date of August 19, 2003 in the present application. Further, although the ‘038 application claims priority to Provisional Application No. 60/450,663, filed on March 3, 2003, the specification of the provisional application does not provide support for the portions of the ‘038 application relied on in the Office Action to reject the claims.

Therefore, to perfect priority and to overcome all the § 103 rejections, enclosed is an English translation of the original Japanese application 2003-295482, filed on August 19, 2003, and a statement that the translation is accurate. Thus, the ‘386 patent is not prior art.

Accordingly, it is respectfully requested that the rejections of Claims 1-4, 6-14, 16-21, and 23-35 be withdrawn.

Consequently, in light of the above discussion, the outstanding grounds for rejection are believed to have been overcome. The application as amended herewith is believed to be in condition for formal allowance. An early and favorable action to that effect is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

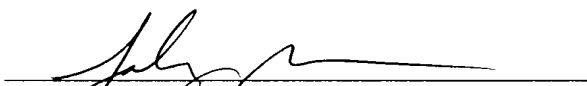
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